

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for providing user interfaces for a plurality of services
2 offered by an information distribution system, comprising:
3 providing a first application to support a first user interface for a first
4 service;
5 providing a second application to support a second user interface for a
6 second service; and
7 coordinating passing of control between the first and second applications
8 via a control mechanism.

1 2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 maintaining first and second message queues for the first and second
3 applications, respectively.

1 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
2 passing control to the first and second applications via messages provided
3 to the first and second message queues, respectively.

1 4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 polling the first or second application to determine a status of the
3 application.

1 5. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
2 polling for a status of the first or second application by providing a poll
3 message to the first or second message queue, respectively.

1 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing a root application to support communication between the first
3 and second applications and a lower layer.

1 7. The method of claim 6, wherein the communication between the root
2 application and the first and second applications is achieved via a set of application
3 programming interfaces (APIs).

1 8. The method of claim 6, wherein the lower layer is a hardware layer.

1 9. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second
2 applications is operable in an active state or an inactive state.

1 10. The method of claim 9, wherein an active application is operative to
2 process key inputs.

1 11. The method of claim 9, wherein the first application transitions to the
2 inactive state upon occurrence of any one of a plurality of events in a first set, and the
3 second application transitions to the inactive state upon occurrence of any one of a
4 plurality of events in a second set.

1 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the plurality of events in the first set
2 includes a first set of key presses, and the plurality of events in the second set includes a
3 second set of key presses.

1 13. The method of claim 9, wherein the first and second applications
2 transition to the active state in response to receiving a launch message in the first and
3 second message queues, respectively.

1 14. The method of claim 9, wherein the first and second applications
2 transition to the active state in response to receiving first and second key presses,
3 respectively.

1 15. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
2 providing a first link in the first user interface to activate the second user
3 interface; and
4 providing a second link in the second user interface to activate the first
5 user interface.

1 16. The method of claim 1, wherein only the first or second application, if
2 any, is active at any particular moment.

1 17. The method of claim 1, wherein each of the first and second
2 applications is independently executed.

1 18. The method of claim 1, wherein the first and second applications are
2 concurrently active or semi-active.

1 19. The method of claim 1, wherein the first application supports an
2 interactive program guide (IPG).

1 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the second application supports
2 video-on-demand (VOD).

1 21. The method of claim 20, wherein the first application is operable to
2 overlay at least a portion of a VOD user interface on top of an IPG user interface.

1 22. The method of claim 20, wherein the second application is operable to
2 overlay at least a portion of an IPG user interface on top of a VOD user interface.

1 23. The method of claim 20, wherein the first and second applications are
2 operable to overlay a channel information window on top of an IPG user interface and a
3 VOD user interface, respectively.

1 24. A method for providing interactive program guide (IPG) and video-
2 on-demand (VOD) user interfaces for IPG and VOD services, comprising:

3 providing an IPG application to support the IPG user interface for the IPG
4 service;

5 providing a VOD application to support the VOD user interface for the
6 VOD service;

7 maintaining IPG and VOD message queues for the IPG and VOD
8 applications, respectively; and

9 passing control to the IPG and VOD applications via messages provided to
10 the IPG and VOD message queues, respectively.

1 25. A terminal configurable to provide user interfaces for a plurality of
2 services offered by an information distribution system, comprising:
3 a first application operable to support a first user interface for a first
4 service;
5 a second application operable to support a second user interface for a
6 second service; and
7 means for passing control between the first and second applications.

1 26. The terminal of claim 25, further comprising:
2 a root application operable to support communication between the first and
3 second applications and a hardware layer.

1 27. The terminal of claim 25, further comprising:
2 first and second message queues operable to store messages for the first
3 and second applications, respectively.

1 28. The terminal of claim 27, wherein the means for passing control is
2 implemented by providing messages to the first and second message queues, and wherein
3 the first and second applications are operable to retrieve and process messages stored in
4 the first and second message queues, respectively.

1 29. The terminal of claim 25, wherein the first application supports an
2 interactive program guide (IPG) and the second application supports video-on-demand
3 (VOD).

1 30. A terminal configurable to provide user interfaces for a plurality of
2 services offered by an information distribution system, comprising:
3 a first state indicative of a first application executing to support a first user
4 interface for a first service;
5 a second state indicative of a second application executing to support a
6 second user interface for a second service;
7 a third state indicative of the first and second applications being idle; and
8 means for transitioning between the first, second, and third states.

1 31. The terminal of claim 25, wherein transitions between the first,
2 second, and third states are in response to defined key presses.